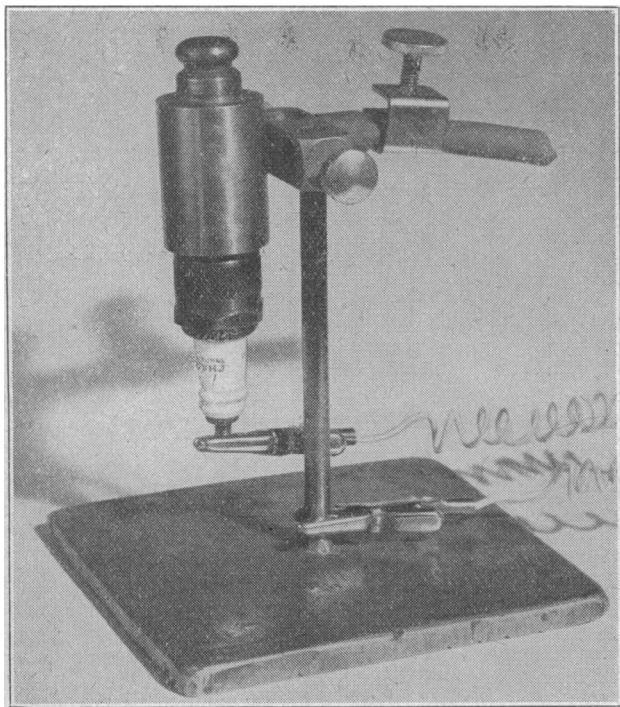


## Preparations and Appliances

### APPARATUS FOR DEMONSTRATING THE EXPLOSIVE PROPERTIES OF ANAESTHETIC GASES AND VAPOURS

Dr. H. J. V. MORTON, senior anaesthetist, Hillingdon Hospital, Uxbridge, writes: Most doctors know which anaesthetic gas and vapour mixtures are inflammable or explosive. Few know from actual experience how very explosive some of these mixtures really are. The simple apparatus illustrated here will demonstrate the explosive properties of gases in a safe but spectacular fashion. It may appeal not only to teachers of anaesthesia but also to anaesthetists unable by mere argument to convince their surgical colleagues of the undesirability of taking risks with cautery or diathermy.

The apparatus consists of a 2-in. (5-cm.) length of 1-in. (2.5-cm.) diameter steel rod drilled through and tapped at one end to take a motor-car sparking plug and turned at the other to hold a toy balloon (see illustration). It is



fixed to a convenient stand by a side tube through which the balloon can be filled with the mixture to be tested. A flash-lamp battery will cause a 6-volt car induction coil to make the necessary spark. A few yards of twin flex and a press-button complete the outfit.

Twenty per cent. cyclopropane in oxygen, or the mixture obtained by passing nitrous oxide (80%) and oxygen (20%) over ether in a Boyle machine, is suitable for demonstration purposes. It is unwise to explode more than a litre of such mixtures in a lecture-room. Experiments with larger quantities, and indeed the initial testing of any mixture, should be conducted out of doors in an open space and well away from hospital wards.

There are believed to be 15,000-20,000 cases of leprosy in Ethiopia, and W.H.O. is sending an expert to demonstrate the most modern treatments.

## Correspondence

### What Homoeopathy Is

SIR,—Some observations made about the middle of last century by Oliver Wendell Holmes may still be the answer to Dr. R. E. W. Oliver's question, "What is homoeopathy?" (January 27, p. 192). Holmes writes (*Currents and Countercurrents in Medical Science, with other Addresses and Essays*, Boston, 1861) of the homoeopathic materia medica as "sugar of milk and a nomenclature," and states that its pretensions and assertions cannot stand before a single hour of calm investigation. Its founder, Samuel Hahnemann, a German physician who lived in Paris and died in 1843, was never able to substantiate his doctrine of *similia similibus curantur* and the use of infinitesimal doses (e.g.,  $\frac{1}{100}$  of  $\frac{1}{1,000,000}$  of a grain of oyster shell), while some ideas of his views on pathology may be gathered from the fact that he stated that seven-eighths of all chronic disease—for example, rickets, epilepsy, cancer, cataract, to mention only a few—were due to "psora," or the itch. Holmes remarks that it is sometimes said of homoeopathy, "At any rate it can do no harm. This may or may not be true as regards the individual, but it always does very great harm to the community to encourage ignorance, error, or deception in a profession which deals with the life and health of our fellow-creatures." His conclusion of the whole matter is that "it may be practised by shrewd men and by honest ones; rarely, it must be feared, by those who are both shrewd and honest. As a psychological experiment on the weakness of cultivated minds, it is the best trick of the century." Perhaps it is an equally good trick in this century also!—I am, etc.,

Cardiff.

LAMBERT ROGERS.

SIR,—I would reply to the letter "What is Homoeopathy?" (January 27, p. 192) that homoeopathy is the product of an often-repeated observation, first clarified and fully investigated by Hahnemann in Napoleonic days. The observation was that a drug which will produce a certain disease picture in normal persons will tend to cure a diseased person presenting this picture if given in appropriate dosage. This, and this only, is homoeopathy. In the development of homoeopathy, industrious and sincere medical men have "proved"—that is, studied—the disorders produced in normal humans by hundreds of drugs, paying particular attention to the earliest manifestations, mainly symptoms. These studies have produced an immense literature, mastery of which is most difficult. An observation which has emerged in the course of the years is that the drug, if correctly selected, will produce its effect in incredible dilution. These observations, both so unlikely on the face of it, are the source of intense theoretical opposition, accusations of mumbo-jumbo, and so forth from those who have no practical experience. Those who have practical experience devote their intellect to the more practical task of mastering the pharmacopoeia, knowing that homoeopathy has much to offer those who succeed. Reinforcements are urgently needed to further the study of homoeopathy, particularly with a view to delineating the sphere of optimum influence of this form of therapy, and to producing reliable statistical reviews of the therapeutic efficacy of the system.—I am, etc.,

Bretby Hall, near Burton-on-Trent.

R. LUNT.

SIR,—One would hesitate to ask you to open your correspondence columns to a full statement of the case for homoeopathy, and indeed one is surprised that it should even be necessary. However, if your correspondent (January 27, p. 192) is interested, then we would invite him to direct his inquiries to the Faculty of Homoeopathy, incorporated by Act of Parliament, which is registered at the Royal London Homoeopathic Hospital, Great Ormond Street,